

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 MCT-01 SSM-03

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /079 W

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P R 281010Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4403

USIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NY

CONFIDENTIAL BEIRUT 3048

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SY LE US

SUBJ: ASSAD ON US ROLE IN LEBANON

REF: PARIS 18675

1. GEORGE BASHIR, BEIRUT CORRESPONDENT OF "AL MOSTAQBAL" (AND RADIO MONTE CARLO), WHO SAYS HE SAT IN ON EDITOR NABIL KHOURY'S INTERVIEW WITH SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASSAD, CONFIDED IN CONVERSATION WITH PAO THAT HE "AT LOSS TO EXPLAIN HOW NABIL COULD HAVE ARRIVED AT CONCLUSION THAT ASSAD ACCUSED U.S. OF BEING BEHIND LEBANON'S MASSACRE."

2. ASSAD DID SAY VIRTUALLY ALL THAT WAS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM, BASHIR ALLOWED, WITH NOTABLE EXCEPTION OF DIRECT
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ACCUSATION OF U.S. BASHIR'S ACCOUNT PUTS ASSAD'S STATEMENTS IN FOLLOWING CONTEXT: IN RAMBLING CONVERSATION "EXUDING SELF-CONFIDENCE AS IF HE WERE ONLY LEADER TO BE RECKONED WITH IN ARAB WORLD," ASSAD STRONGLY DEPLORED "THAT DIRTY WAR" AND MAINTAINED THAT SYRIAN INTERVENTION WAS "ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO SAVE THE SITUATION--AND IN SPITE OF AMERICAN AS WELL AS RUSSIAN

WARNINGS. THIS BLOODY DISASTER COULD HAVE GONE ON AND ON. WE HAD TO PUT AN END TO THE MASSACRE, REGARDLESS OF U.S. WARNINGS."

3. ASSAD ON ARAFAT (ACCORDING TO SAME SOURCE): "HE IS A CONSTANT LIAR WHOM YOU CANNOT TRUST. BUT WHATEVER HE SAYS DOESN'T MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE NOW; HE'S IN OUR HIP POCKET."

4. ON SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS: "EGYPTIAN MIGS IN NEED OF MAINTENANCE WORK ALREADY IN SOVIET UNION FOR REPAIRS, AND SOME SPARE PARTS ALREADY DELIVERED TO CAIRO."

5. ON SOUTH LEBANON, BASHIR SAID, SYRIAN PRESIDENT DID NOT SEEM TO BE "IN THE LEAST CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING DOWN THERE."

6. BIO NOTE: BORN IN JERUSALEM, 48-YEAR-OLD NABIL KHOURY IS NOT ONLY EDITOR OF AL MOSTAQBAL BUT ALSO PUBLISHER/"OWNER," WITH SOLID (REPORTEDLY \$1,000,000) FINANCIAL BACKING FROM SAUDI (ALSO PALESTINIAN ORIGIN) BUSINESSMAN FEISAL ABOU KHADRA AND INDIRECT SUPPORT (HEAVY ADVERTISING) FROM MILLIONAIRE ADNAN KHASHUGGI, PLUS SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT BY PERSONAL FRIEND LEBANESE BANKER JOSEPH ABDO EL-KHOURY OF BANQUE MEDITERRANEE. KHOURY WAS VOA ARABIC STAFFER IN BEIRUT (1953-61)

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BEFORE BECOMING RADIO LIBAN'S PROGRAM MANAGER AND TURNING TO WRITING SHORT STORIES AND PLAYS. HIS PARIS-BASED VENTURE WAS PRECEDED BY EDITING SALIM LAWZI'S SUCCESSFUL WEEKLY "AL HAWADITH" FOR SEVERAL YEARS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 28-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BEIRUT03048
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770230-0524
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770612/aaaaaiye.tel
Line Count: 99
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c136da75-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 PARIS 18675
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2014595
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASSAD ON US ROLE IN LEBANON
TAGS: PINT, SY, LE, US, XF, (ASSAD, HAFIZ)
To: STATE USIA
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c136da75-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009